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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION NEW FRENCH LABOR LAW

- TOKYO

LEAD STORIES: A front-page story from Washington in Friday morning's Tokyo Shimbun quoted an AP report as saying that former vice presidential chief of staff Libby told prosecutors that he obtained permission from President Bush to leak information.

1. "New French Labor Law: The Pain Involved in Creating Jobs" The liberal Asahi editorialized (4/7): "France has been rocked over the introduction of a new labor system for young people. Demonstrations are being held all across the country, with many highschools and universities closing down. This movement, which has brought more than one million people into the streets, represents the largest unrest in France since the so-called May '68 Revolution.... France is known for having the strongest worker protections in Europe. Young people refuse to accept the new labor law, which would protect workers after a two-year trial period but raise their risk of being dismissed in the interim.... On the instructions of President Chirac, Interior Minister Sarkozy and other senior government officials have begun talks with union and student leaders, as well as business leaders, to calm the situation. If the unrest drags on, international confidence in France could be shaken. Japan and other advanced countries are keeping a close watch on how France will resolve a puzzle involving vested interests, competitiveness, and employment."

SCHIEFFER